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Some Information About National Communists in Latvia

BERKLAVS, Eduards (son of Karlis)

During the period of independent Latvia he was sentenced to 3½ years of forced labor for anti-government (Communist) activities. It seems there was not sufficient evidence. He served his sentence in the stone quarries at Kalnciems. After 3 years, i.e. in May 1939, he was released from forced labor. Then he traveled illegally through all of Latvia, renewing his Komsomol activities (Komsomol underground organizations). In 1940, when the Latvian government had all the Komsomol leaders arrested, Berklavs managed to escape arrest and he assumed the new leadership of the Komsomol.

During the first few postwar years, he was secretary of the Central Committee of the Latvian Komsomol and studied at the university for party professors. Around 1953, he was secretary of the Riga Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, and then became First Secretary of the Riga Committee and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

On 27 February 1959 he published articles in Padomju Jaunatne (Soviet Youth) and Rigas Balsss (Voice of Riga), in which he complained that not enough Latvians were joining the party and the Komsomol.

E. berklavs was released from office on 15 July 1959 for reasons of "localism, nationalism, and deviation from the party line."

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NIKONOV, Aleksandrs (son of Aleksandrs).

Born in 1913 in Abrenes sprinkis, Zaikovas village, in the family of a poor peasant. He graduated from the Abrene secondary school and studied at the Latvian University. While at school, he was the leader of an illegal Communist group. He joined the party in 1940. He was the head of the Propaganda and Agitation Division for the Abrene ksyon. During the war he served in the Soviet army and was severely wounded. After the war he was secretary of the party committees of Vilaka and Daugavpils kaysons. In 1951 he became Minister of Agriculture. He was purged in 1961 for "nationalism."

DZERVE, Pauls.

A native of Riga, born 1918. Studied economics very successfully at the university of independent Latvia. Only during the first occupation period (1940) he began to be active as a Komsomol leader. During the war he went to Russia. He graduated from the university and in 1950 received post-graduate a/degree at the Latvian State University. He obtained the degree of Candidate of Sciences in 1953 at the Leningrad University for his work on "The 1929-1933 Economic Crisis in Bourgeois Latvia and Its Special Features". In 1955 he became a university docent in Riga, and in 1958 - director of the Economics Institute of the Academy of Sciences Latvian SSR. He was purged at the same time as Perklaivs, in the summer of 1959.

In the winter of 1961 he is said to have died in an automobile accident, although there have been rumors in Latvia that he was murdered by the Cheka.

(All three of the above biographies indicate that these men had been trusted party members for many years , but at the same time also Latvian national Communists. Now all of them have been deprived of their leading positions ^{released} and from office. One must assume that these men feel some bitterness because of the wrongs inflicted by Moscow.-
Reporter's Comment.)

INTERROGATION ABOUT CONDITIONS IN OCCUPIED LATVIA

1. Information about the interviewed person: Mrs. Antonija GAILITIS, over 70 years old. Lived in Riga, a seamstress by occupation. Came to live with her married daughter in Long Island, N.Y.; arrived in the US on 28 February 1962. She traveled via Moscow; the flight to New York took 13 hours and was made by SAS airplane. In Moscow she stayed at the kolkhoz farmers' hotel, where it is permitted to remain only 24 hours; however, Mrs. G. stayed there for 4 days until she was able to find a room in a hotel. At the latter she had to pay 3 rubles a day and the room had all conveniences. The visa for her departure to the US had already been issued in March 1961. All her friends had envied her for being able to leave the Soviet Union, or rather Latvia.

2. The interrogation took place on 13 March 1962.

Mrs. G. stated the following:

- a) During the deportations of 1949 families were not separated. Now all of them have been given the possibility to return to Latvia.
- b) There were rumors in Latvia that women who were not employed and whose children were over 15 years old, would be sent to work in kolkhozes.
- c) There were rumors that no one was permitted to register in two places (in the city and at the seashore or in the country), and that family homes would be expropriated.
- d) No information is published in the newspapers about traffic accidents, and nothing is said about them on the radio. However, one often hears about such accidents from eye-witnesses. When a small steamer sank in the Daugava and about 400 persons were drowned, nothing was made known about it (this happened several years ago). Also, nothing is

made known about bus or automobile collisions, although they are said to happen fairly often.

- e) All the monuments which were erected (in Riga) during the independence period have not been removed or otherwise damaged.
- f) The Large Cemetery (Lieli kapi) in Riga is going to be destroyed, because highways are to be built across it. For some time now there have been no burials in this cemetery.
- g) It was rumored that a garage for private cars was to be built in Riga, but Mrs. G. did not know where.
- h) Riga has beautiful buildings and many parks. The city is very clean. Mrs. G. was horrified at the dirt in Long Island cities, although compared to New York they are very clean.
- i) If anyone in Riga appears with a large package, he is certain to be checked by militiamen. They inspect all packages, such as for example bundles being carried home from the laundry. This is probably done to prevent stealing.
- j) Mrs. G. did not know anything about the flight of Lt Col Glenn. She said that the Riga, or Russian, press or radio had not reported it (this is not true, they did report it, even in Latvian newspapers, although in a very brief, official form.- Reporter's comment.)
- k) During her stay /in Moscow/ the Lenin mausoleum was closed for "repairs".
said
- l) Mrs. G./that one could not hear Voice of America or other Latvian-language broadcasts (in Riga), because they were all being jammed.

The people in Riga do listen to broadcasts of religious services from Finland and Sweden. Although they don't understand the words, they know the tunes of the hymns. The churches are full of old people, but the young people do not go to church.

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majority of people are Russians. Russian is spoken in government offices, on streetcars, in the parks, movie theaters, and of course in the customs and security offices.

As I understand, it is possible to put up with the material living standard. The apartments are cheap, and so is transportation. Bread and potatoes are no more expensive than in Sweden, and a worker is able to buy cotton fabrics and footwear. One cannot complain directly about being in great need. It is also not possible to speak about slavery, as the Latvians have the same rights as recently arrived Russians.

The most tragic part is the fact that the Latvians have been so greatly "thinned out" that, on arriving in the country and listening to the language, one may doubt whether this is a Latvian country and a Latvian city. It seems that all Latvians/understand this tragedy, whatever their political opinions may be. And they understand also that at present nothing can be done about it: it is like a huge stream of our time which carries everything with it. If you want to live, keep your head above water and swim along. If you try to struggle against the stream, you will drown. I heard someone say: "We do what we are told, we testify and we vote as we are told, and we go to meetings when they call us. If we follow orders, we can live." I had several conversations with Munters. He said he did not hope for ~~any~~ changes any more and therefore he made the most of his present life."

II. A letter, which was recently received from Northern Vidzeme, described rural conditions as follows:

"Most of the kolkhoz grass remained uncut. The rye was harvested in

a hurry, but the stacks remain in the fields, and the grain starts to germinate. The potato fields are covered with mud. The sugar beets will probably remain on the field, they are frozen in the mud. What shall we eat ourselves, and what shall we feed to our animals ?

There is no bread. The kolkhoz has no bakery; the bakery is in the rayon center (about 6 km from the kolkhoz. Ed.) One has to go there for bread, and sometimes one has to stand in line all day. Not every family can spare a person who could stand in line for bread. For the time being we eat what we have grown in our own little plot.

Two decrees have been published which concern/owners of livestock:

1. All milk must be delivered to the kolkhoz center, and one half of the delivered milk quantity is returned in the form of skimmed milk;
2. the hay harvested from private plots may be retained to the extent of 2.5 tons per cow; the rest must be delivered to the kolkhoz.

Such decrees do not actually signify a confiscation of the kolkhoz workers' private property, but they are more of a threat to their existence.

Another thing: It has been a long time since we saw anything like groats and wheat flour. They are not available in the rayon city. In Riga it is still possible to find some things, not in the stores but "under the counter."

~~Page~~ 4 October 1962.

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